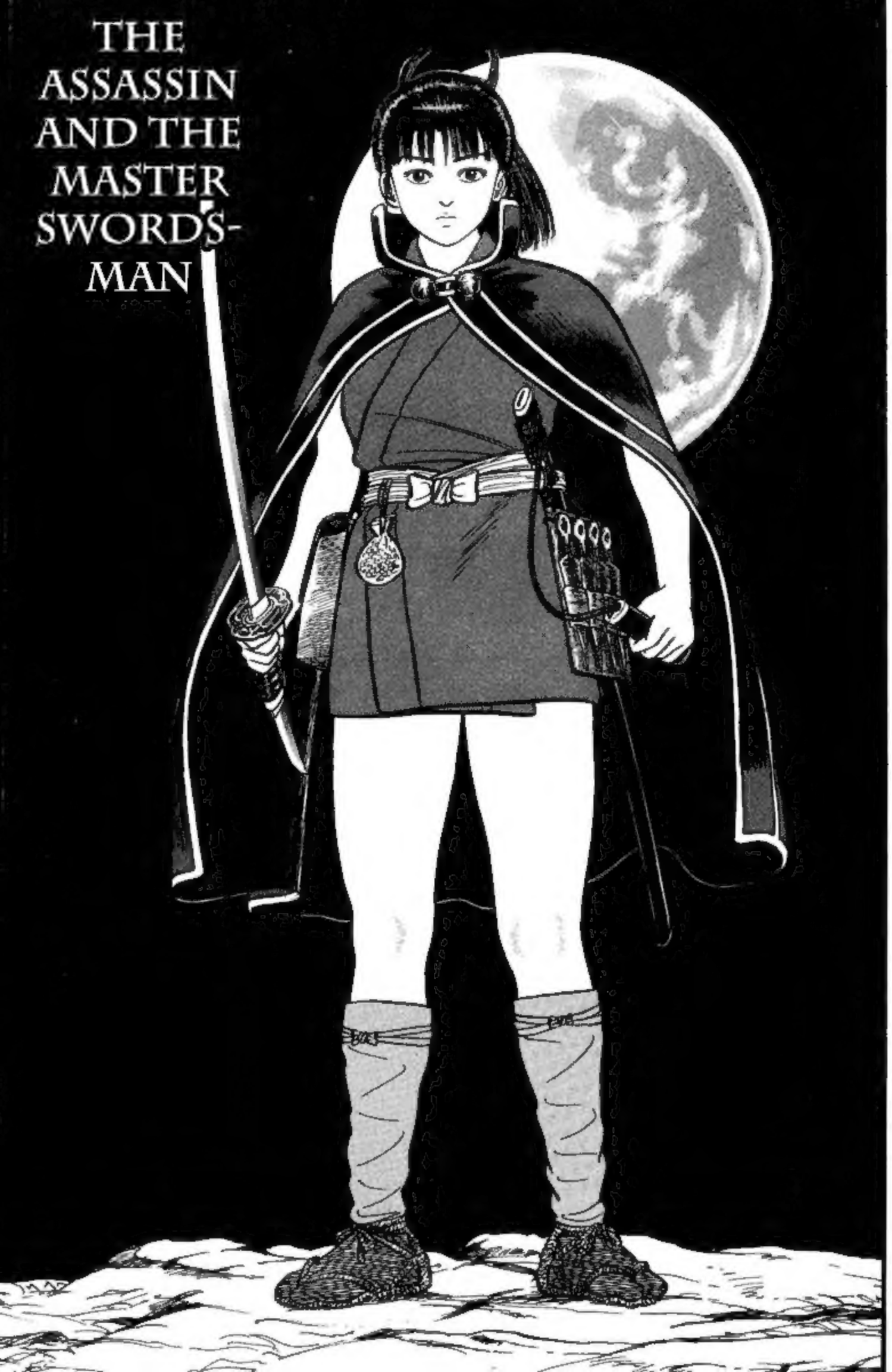
THE ASSASSIN AND THE MASTER SWORDSMAN



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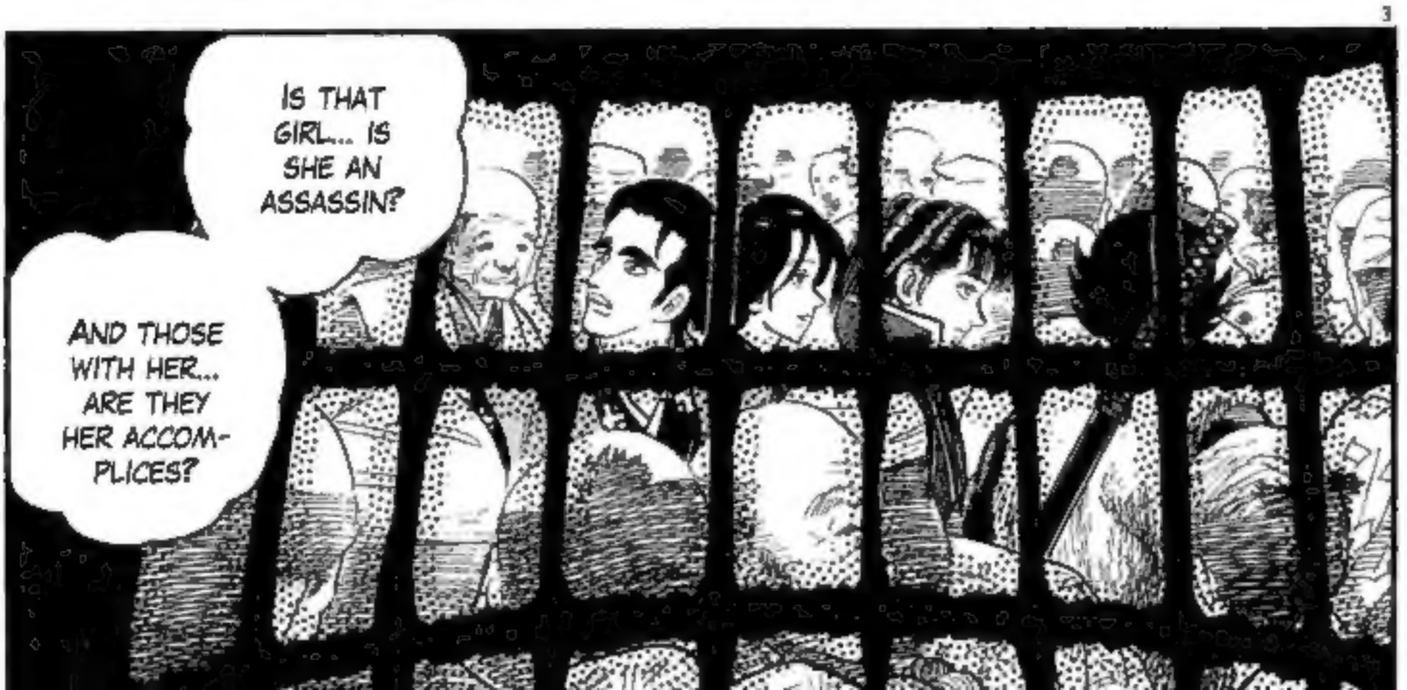
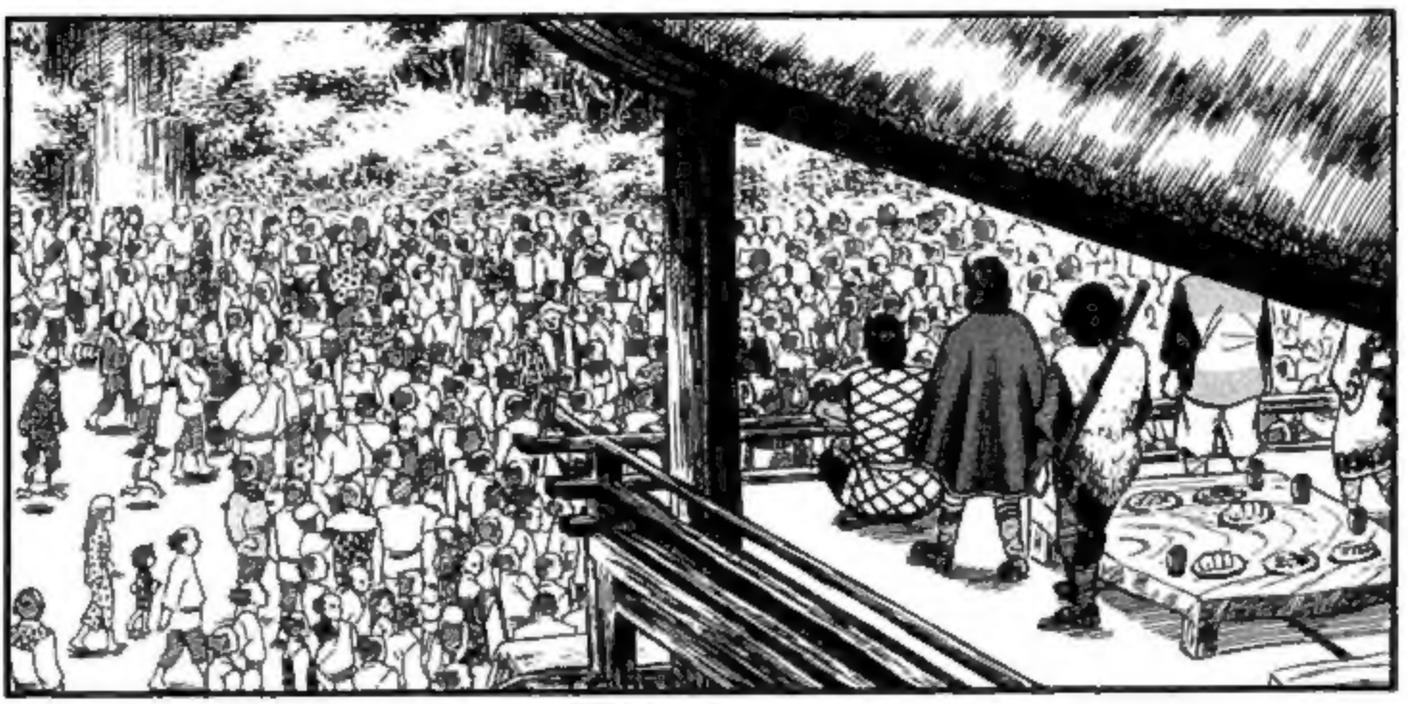
LEAVE IT TO US.
TAKE CARE OF THE REST.


IS THAT GIRL... IS SHE AN ASSASSIN?
AND THOSE WITH HER... ARE THEY HER ACCOM-PLICES?

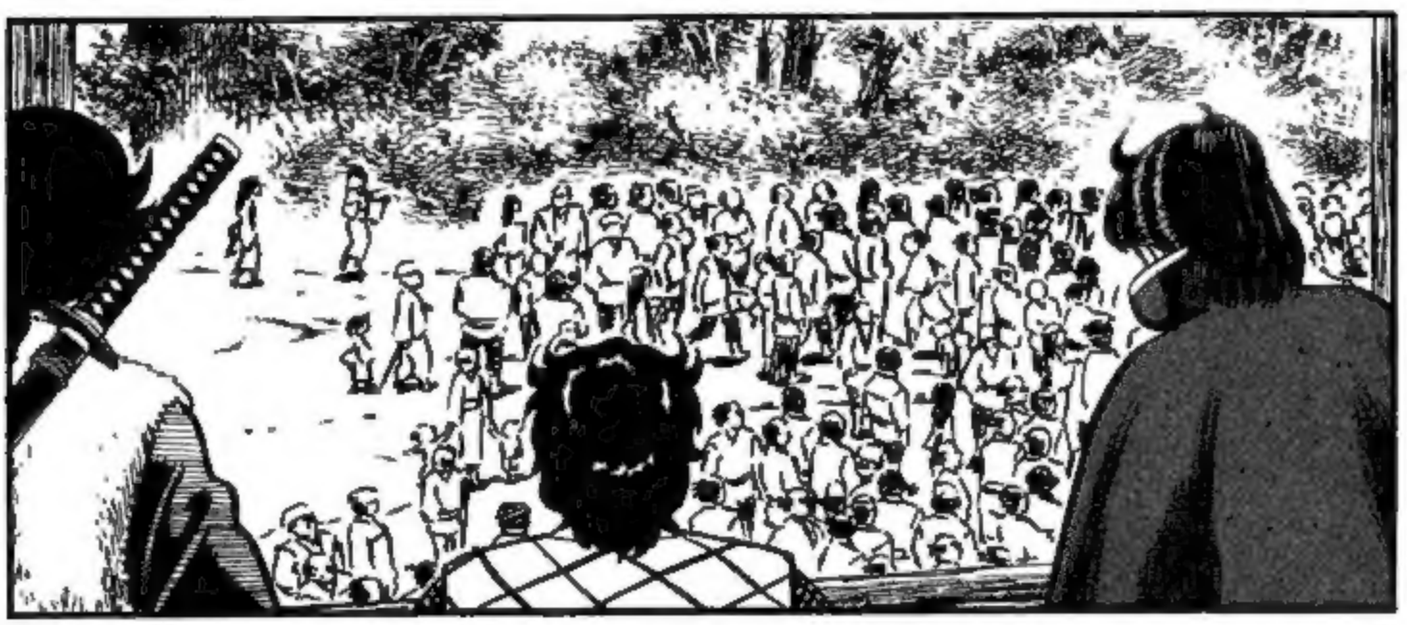
YES.
THERE MAY YET BE OTHERS. TRY SEARCHING ABOUT A BIT MORE.
ANYWAY, I SAW IT YET AGAIN!!...THAT YOUNG GIRL'S TECHNIQUE!!
WHAT SWIFT MOVEMENTS SHE HAS!



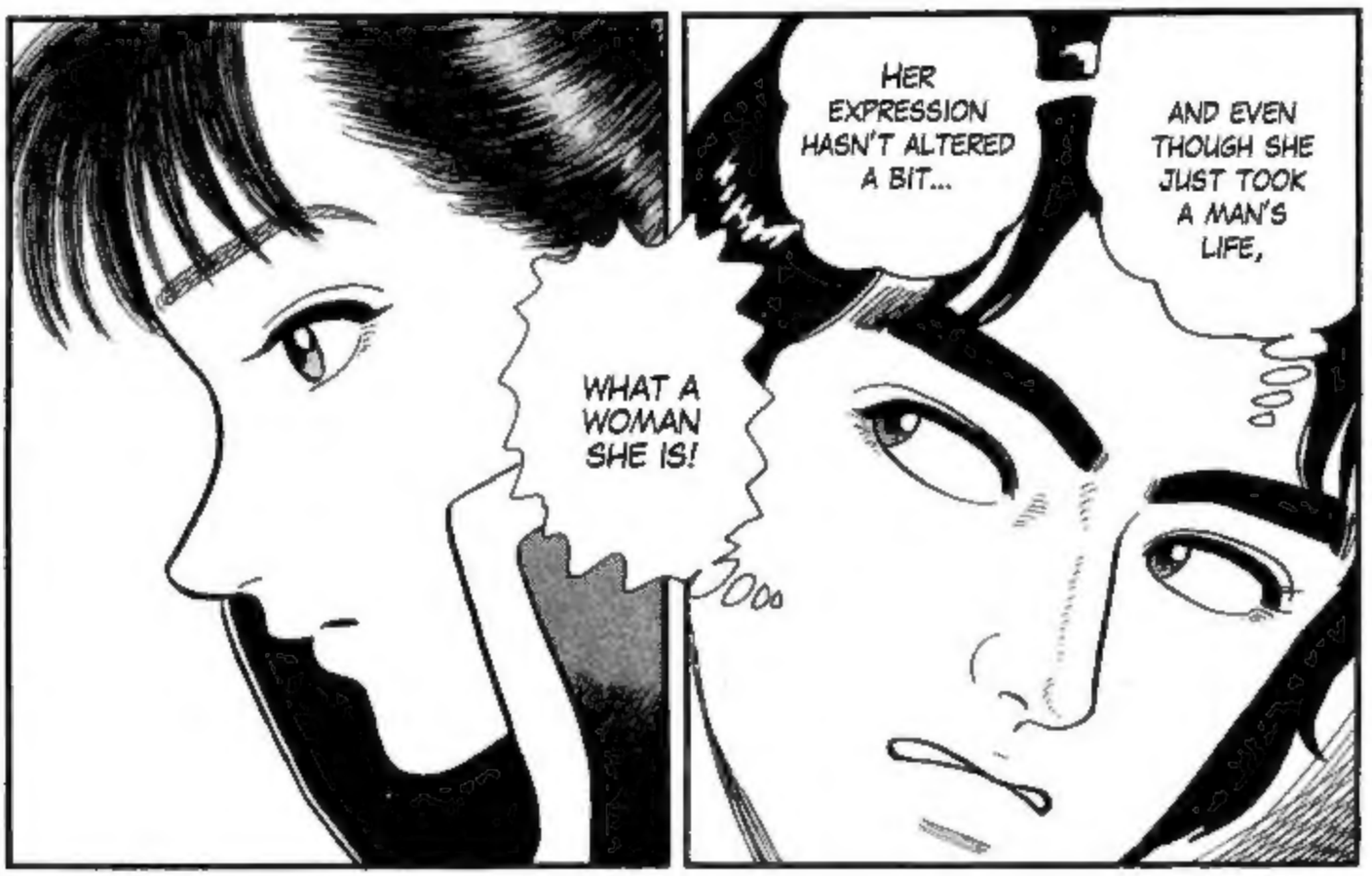
IT'S DEFINITELY POSSIBLE.
OR IF HE WAS TASKED TO MEET WITH HIS COMRADES HERE.
I WONDER IF THAT MAN WAS JUST HERE TO SEE THE FESTIVAL,

YOU ALREADY KILLED TWO ALL ON YOUR OWN, AZUMI-CHAN!
OH, NOT AT ALL! YOU DID GREAT!
MAYBE I WAS A BIT... RASH.

THERE MAY BE OTHER TARGETS WHO CAME HERE TO MEET WITH THIS ONE.
HYŌSUKE, SEARCH VEEEEERY THOROUGHLY.



WITH NO HEED TO NEEDING HER OTHER COMRADES, SHE RUSHED AHEAD ON HER OWN...
SHE'S SO... HEADSTRONG WHEN IT COMES TO TAKING LIFE...
DOES SHE MEAN TO KILL ALL THIRTEEN TARGETS SINGLEHANDEDLY?


HER EXPRESSION HASN'T ALTERED A BIT...
AND EVEN THOUGH SHE JUST TOOK A MAN'S LIFE,
WHAT A WOMAN SHE IS!

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AAAHH! WATCH OUT NOW!
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AAAAH, THANK YOU VERY MUCH, YOU SAVED HIS LIFE...H-HOW COULD WE EVER REPAY YOU...!?
NO, NO...NO NEED TO WORRY!
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THANK YOU VERY MUCH
ありがとうございます

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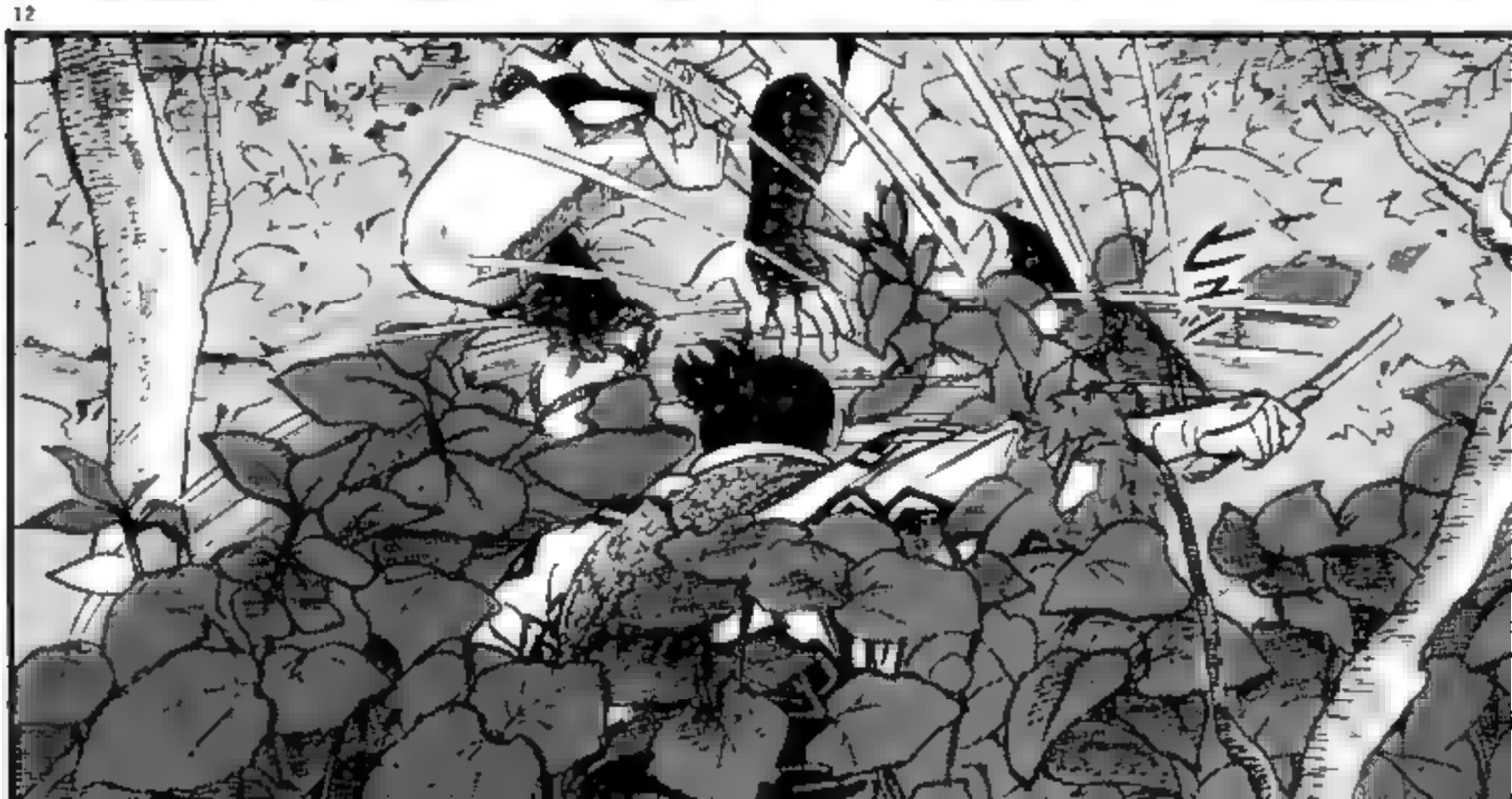
ガサッ
ガララ

ドサッ!!



INO!?
BIG BROTH-EEEEER!

WHY'D YA LEAVE ME BEHIND LIKE THAT!?
WHY DID YOU FOLLOW ME!?

ABOVE ALL, WE CANNOT DRAW ANY ATTENTION TO OURSELVES! IT'S WHY I SAID I WAS FINE TRAVELING ON MY OWN!
BUT RIGHT NOW, WE'RE MEETING TO FINALIZE OUR PLANS!
THAT'S WHEN YOUR PART WILL COME IN!
WHEN WE PUT THE PLAN TO INFILTRATE EDO CASTLE INTO MOTION,
HOW MANY TIMES HAVE I TOLD YOU!?

TEN WHOLE DAYS FOR YOU TO COME BACK, BIG BRO!
B-BUT OLD GON SAID IT WOULD'VE TAKEN...
I DID HEAR THAT!

ONE, THREE...
ONE, TWO...
ONE...
ARE WAY TOO LOOONG!
AND TEN DAYS

TEN DAYS ARE NO GOOD AT ALL!!!!
LOOK, I'VE NEVER BEEN APART FROM YOU MORE THAN ONE DAAAY!!

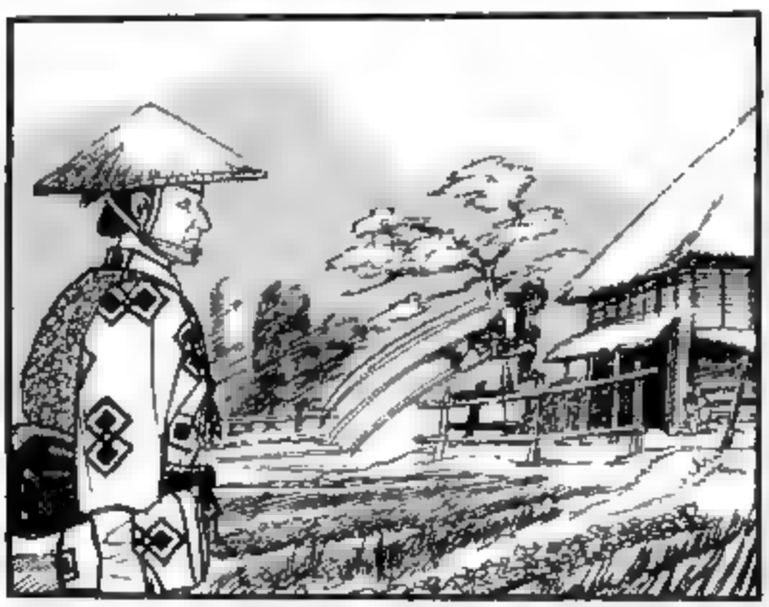
I DON'T WANNA BE TOO FAR FROM YOU, BIG BROTHEEEER!
TEN DAYS ARE TOO LOOOONG!
I JUST CAN'T STAND IT!

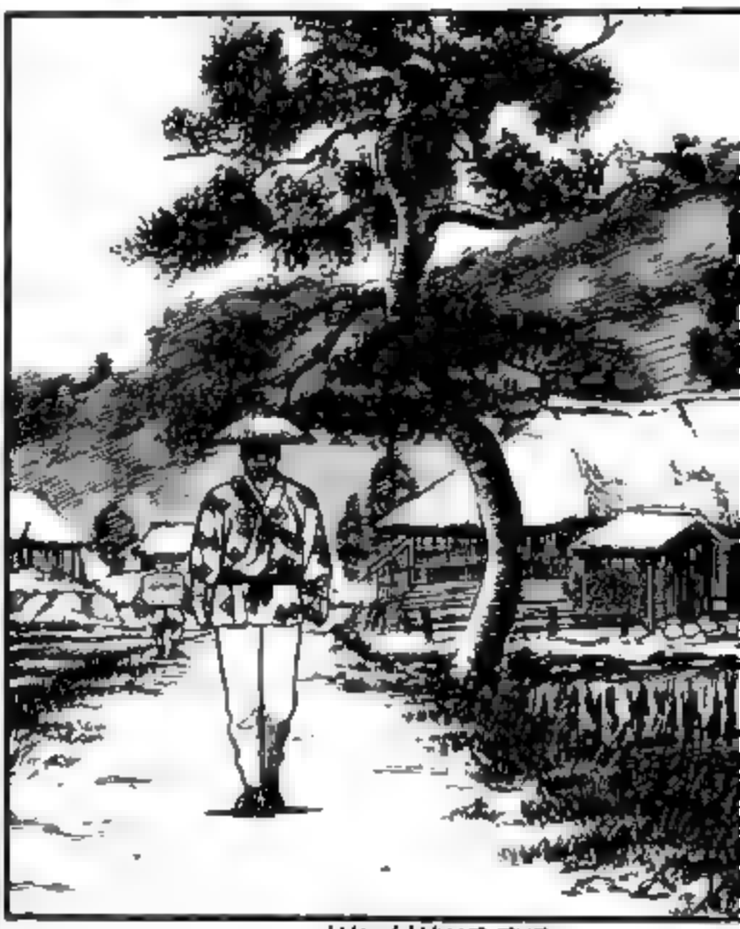
I JUST DON'T WANT TO BE AWAY FROM MY BIG BROTHER!
SO, SINCE I WON'T, LET ME STAY BESIDE YOOOOU!

IT'S OKAY IF I JUST DON'T STAND OUT, RIGHT!?

……
JUST TAKE ME WITH YOU!
I WON'T HINDER YOU! I'LL STAY FAR BEHIND YOU! NOBODY WILL KNOW I'M HERE!

……





WAH! WHAT THE...

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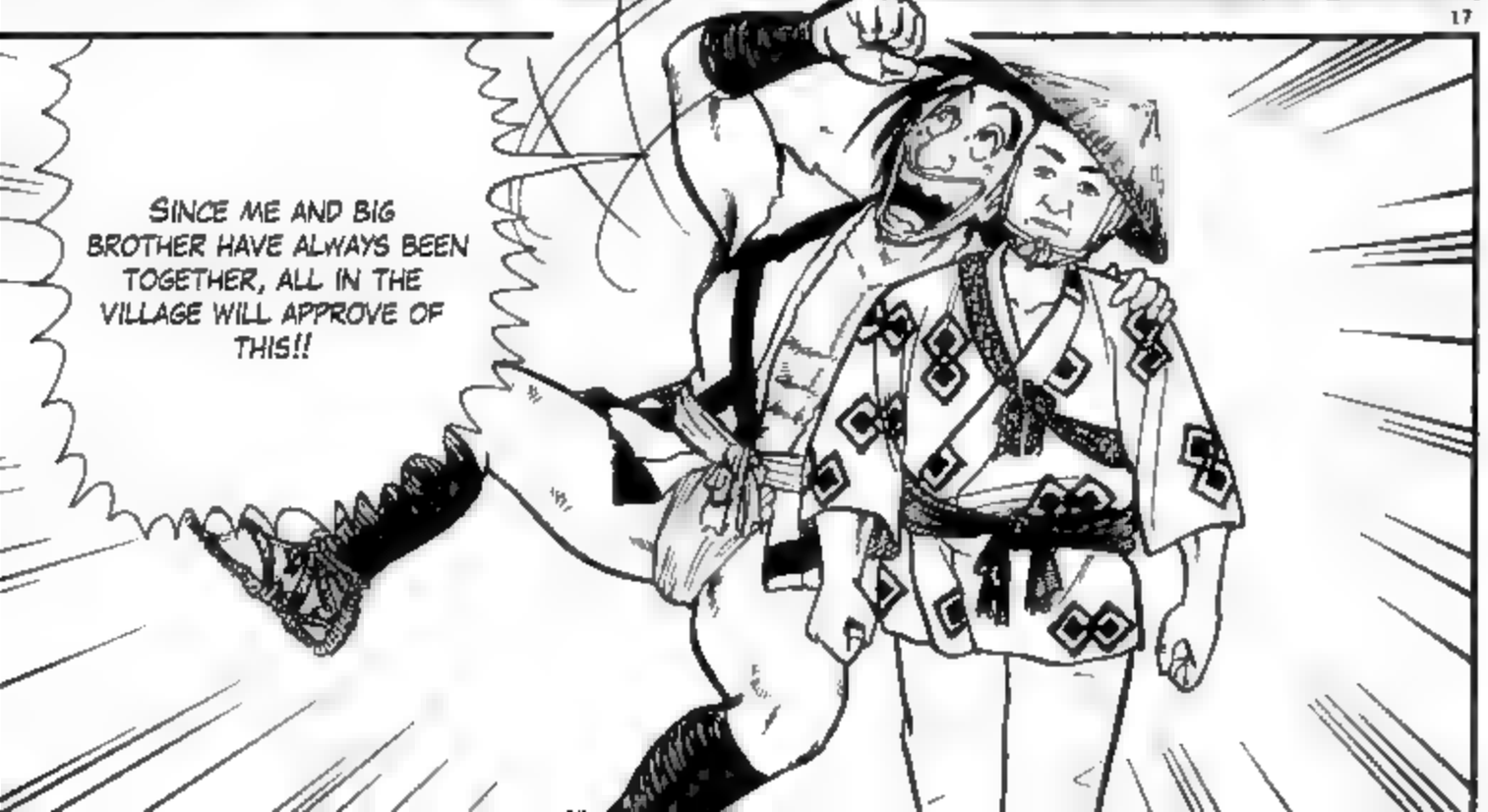
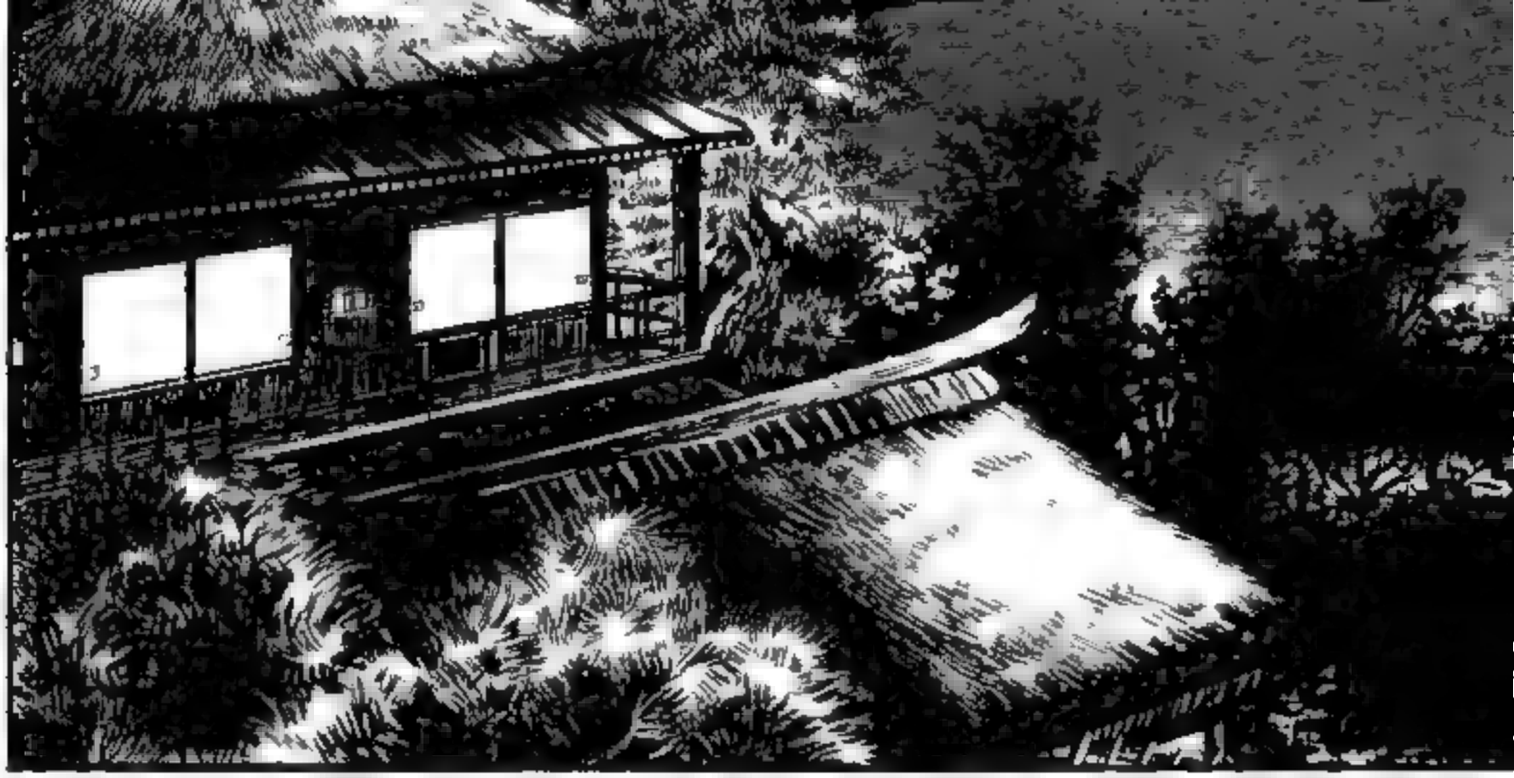
ALRIGHT, INO! COME HERE! LET'S GO TOG-ETHER!
BIG BROTHER!
BIG BROO OOOO OOOO OOO!
UOOOO YOOOOO!
FOR REEEEAL!?


SINCE ME AND BIG BROTHER HAVE ALWAYS BEEN TOGETHER, ALL IN THE VILLAGE WILL APPROVE OF THIS!!



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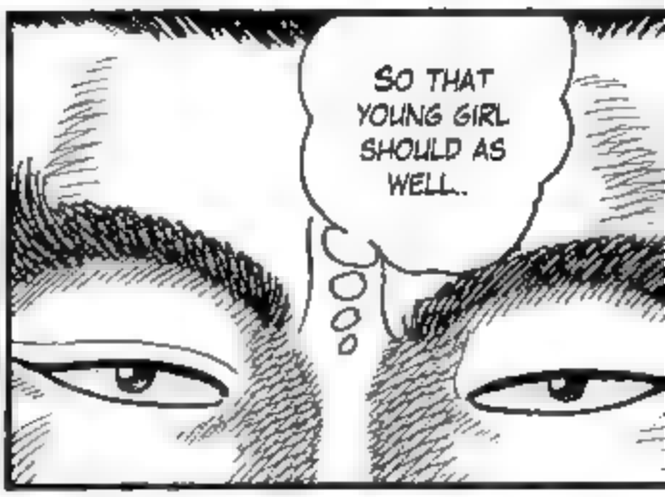
TO NOTICE ME.
I CAN'T BELIEVE FOR A MOMENT THAT YOU FAILED
I SAW WHAT YOU DID TWICE OVER WITH MY OWN EYES.

.....
I DID REALIZE.
YES.
THAT YOU STOPPED AT THAT SAME INN BY CHANCE...

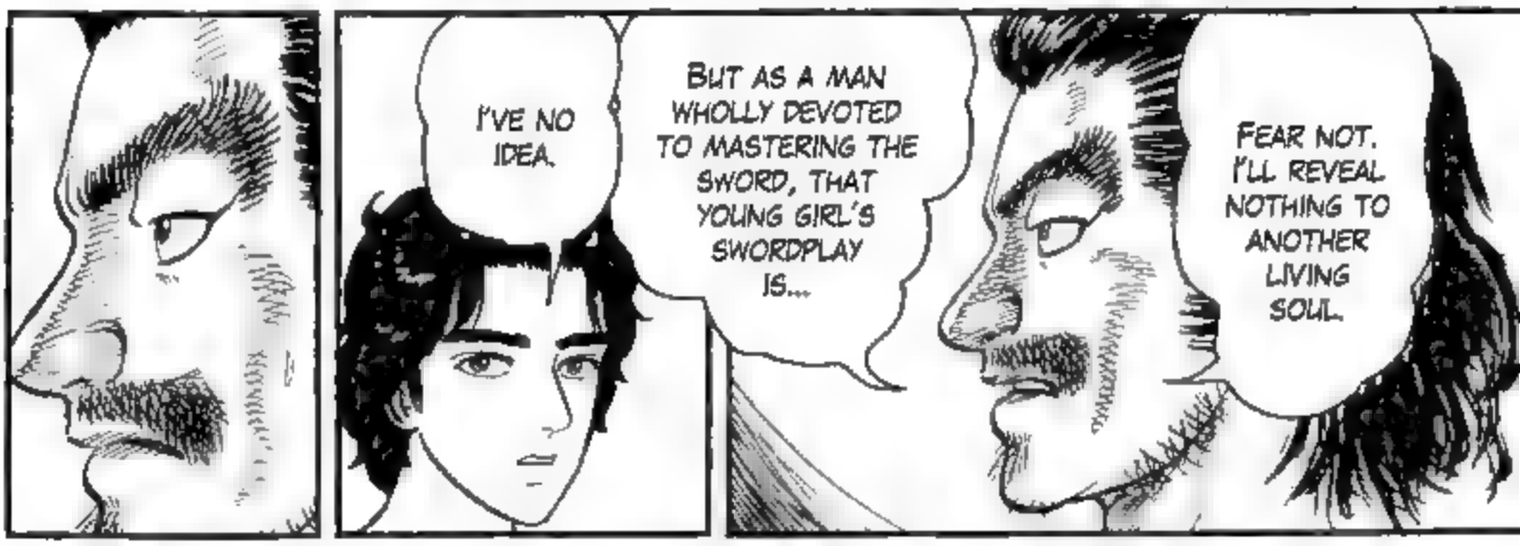
WHO I AM...?
ARE YOU AWARE


SO THAT YOUNG GIRL SHOULD AS WELL..

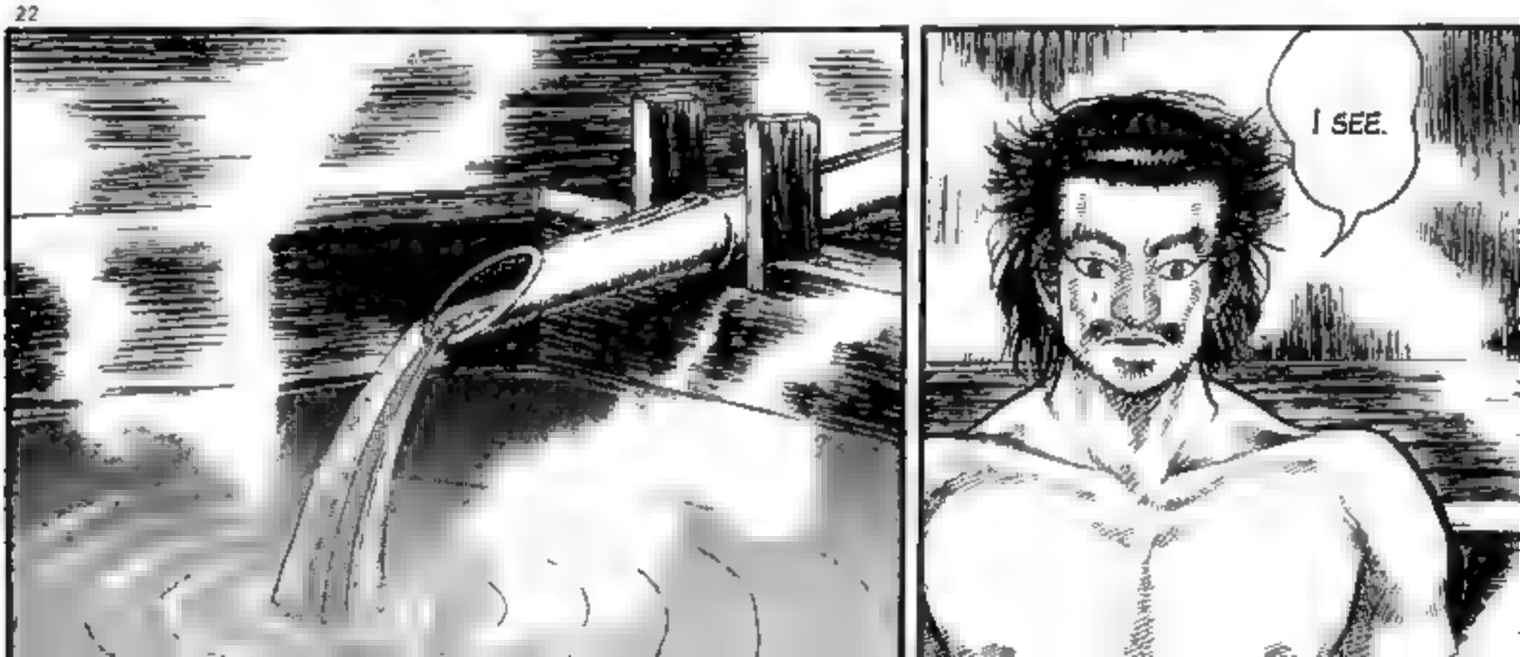
AND YET...
SO DID THAT GIRL ALSO KNOW THAT I'M MUSASHI!?
SO HE KNEW!
!!
.....
THE FAMOUS MIYAMOTO MUSASHI.
THEN...
WHY DID SHE ACT SO... INDIFFERENT?

SUCH AMAZING TECHNIQUE?
PARDON ME, BUT I JUST WONDER ABOUT THE NAME OF THAT GIRL WHO DISPLAYED
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
HER NAME IS AZUMI.
.....
WITH THE FAMILIES THEY COME FROM, NO?
I WITNESSED THOSE KILLINGS, BUT...I'M BEING IGNORED BECAUSE EVEN THOUGH I'M AN EXPERT IN BATTLE, I HAVE NO CONNECTION WHATSOEVER...
AZUMI!

I'D LIKE YOU TO TELL ME.
WHO TAUGHT YOUNG AZUMI THE WAYS OF THE SWORD.
AND HER STYLE. HER SCHOOL?


FEAR NOT. I'LL REVEAL NOTHING TO ANOTHER LIVING SOUL.
BUT AS A MAN WHOLLY DEVOTED TO MASTERING THE SWORD, THAT YOUNG GIRL'S SWORDPLAY IS...
I'VE NO IDEA.

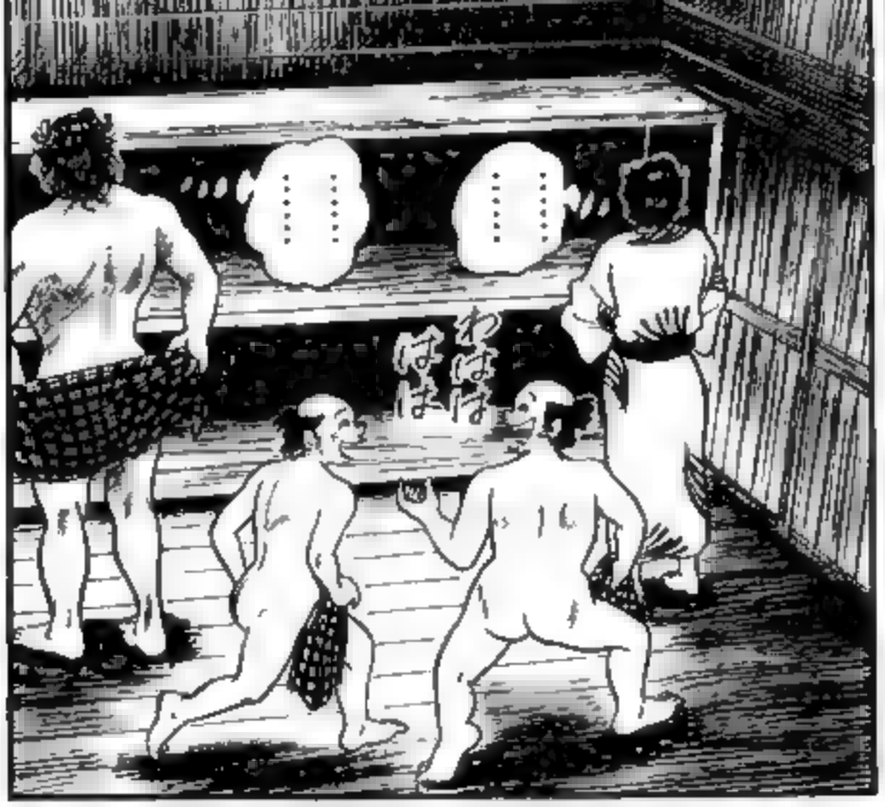
I HAVE NOT KNOWN AZUMI FOR VERY LONG...
.....


I SEE.

TO HAVE REACHED THAT LEVEL AT THAT YOUNG AGE MEANS THAT SHE PROBABLY SPENT EVERY DAY, FROM MORNING TO DUSK, TRAINING WITH THE SWORD UNDER SOME RENOWNED MASTER FROM WHEN SHE WAS A SMALL CHILD...
JUST IMAGINING HER PROFICIENCY WITH THE SWORD ...

LET ME EXCUSE MYSELF.

TAKE A GREAT INTEREST IN I, MUSASHI!
EVEN ONE LIKE AZUMI SHOULD
WELL...
BUT EVEN KNOWING WHO I AM,
WHY DOES SHE NOT EVEN SPARE ME A GLANCE?



SO SHE LIKELY SIMPLY IGNORED ME.
SHE HAD NO REASON TO KILL ME.
EVEN IF I WITNESSED HER AT WORK, AND EVEN IF I WAS AT BOTH SITES...

I SEE! IT MUST BE...

TO TEST MY SWORD AGAINST HER OWN!
SHE SHOULD EVEN WANT

AND...
HER TRUE FEELINGS...AZUMI'S TRUE FEELINGS SHOULD BE THAT SHE WANTS TO TALK WITH ME ABOUT THE SWORD...

AH, HYŌSUKE-DONO! YOU WERE HAVING A BATH, TOO!?
I'LL TAKE ONE NOW!

AZUMI!
!!

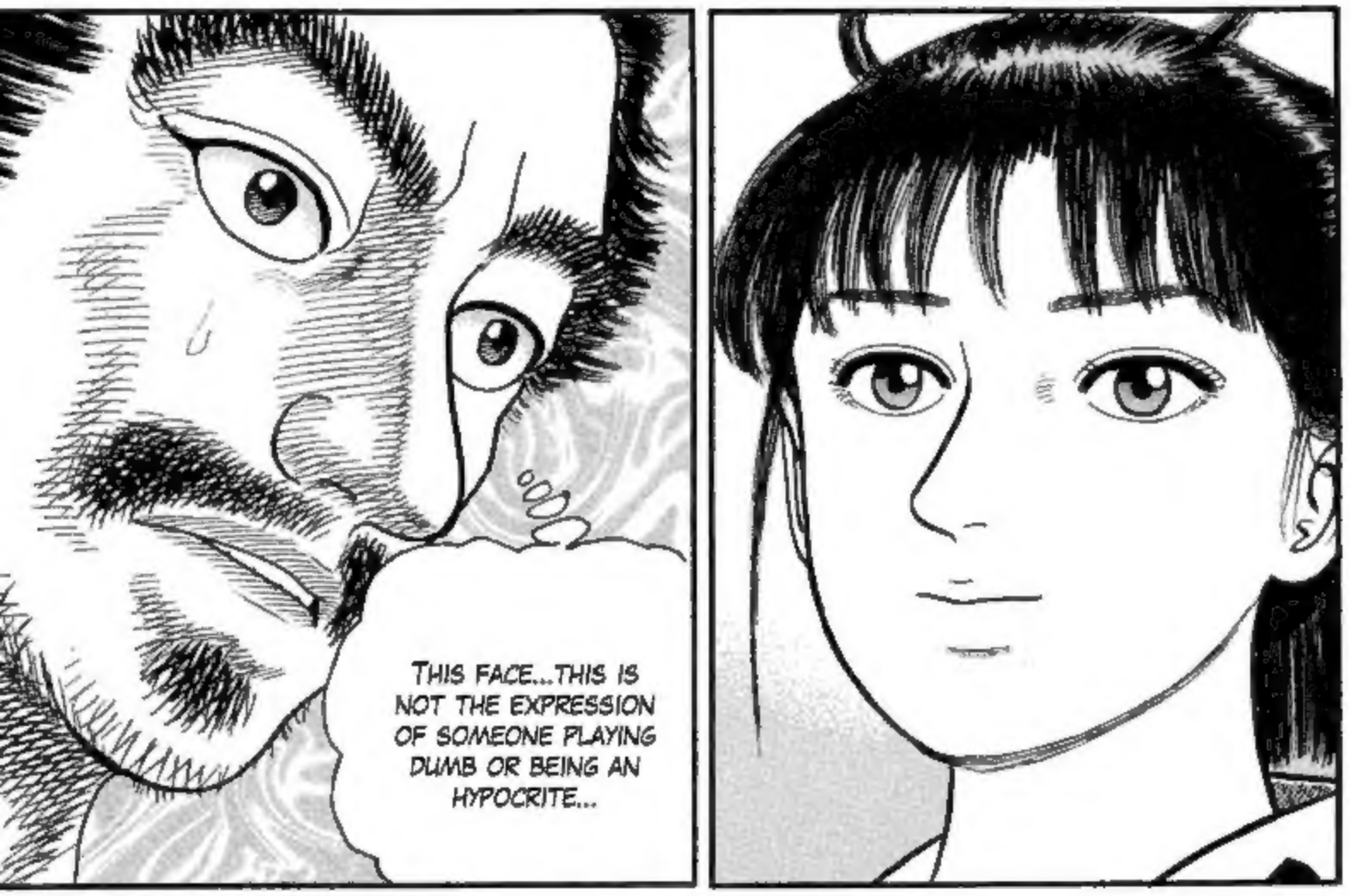
AH?

RIGHT! I'VE HEARD SO MUCH ABOUT YOU!
HE'S MIYA-MOTO MU-SASHI.
!!
UMM...

.....
SOMEHOW...BY COINCIDENCE, YOU SPOTTED ME TWICE!
IT SEEMS YOU'RE A FAMOUS SWORD-MASTER!

SHE SAID I 'SEEM' TO BE A FAMED MASTER OF THE SWORD?
"UHMMM," SHE SAID?
DOES IT MEAN SHE FORGOT MY NAME JUST THEN?
IS THIS LITTLE GIRL JUST PLAYING THE FOOL?
I HUMBLY REQUEST YOU KEEP THEM A SECRET.
THOSE WERE SECRET MISSIONS.

.....
AHHH ...
I SEE!
YOU SHOULDN'T WORRY ABOUT ALL THAT.
MIYAMOTO MUSASHI-SAMA KEEPS HIMSELF ABOVE ALL THE VULGARITY AROUND HIM.


THIS FACE...THIS IS NOT THE EXPRESSION OF SOMEONE PLAYING DUMB OR BEING AN HYPOCRITE...

YES!
C'MON! HURRY!
AZUMI-CHAN! NOBODY'S IN HERE NOW!

PLEASE EXCUSE ME!

.....
.....

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SHE IS NOT REMOTELY INTERESTED IN I, MUSASHI!?
AND YET...
SHE SHOULD LIVE BY DEDICATING HERSELF TO IMPROVING HER SKILL WITH THE BLADE!

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